Global Perspectives on the Notion of 'Target Culture' associated with English as a Foreign Language

RUBAIYAT JAHAN

PETER STEWART ROGER
Macquarie University

The emergence of English as a global language raises issues for the way in which the 'target culture' associated with the language is conceptualised by English language learners in various parts of the world. This paper reports on a focus group study involving language teachers from five different countries (Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Mauritius and South Korea) who had themselves learned English as a second or foreign language. The study elicited the views of the participants on the nature of target culture as it applies to English, their attitudes towards it and the factors that influenced the way that they perceived it. Findings revealed a number of sharp distinctions between the views of participants from so-called 'Outer Circle' countries and those of participants from 'Expanding Circle' countries. The results lend further support to calls in the literature for a reconceptualisation of 'integrativeness' as an element of motivation as it relates to the learning of English in today's globalised world. Some themes that would constitute fruitful avenues for further research are also suggested.

INTRODUCTION

On a global scale, English is used by an ever-increasing number of speakers as a first language (L1), second language (L2) and foreign language (FL). These speakers come from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and use the language for a range of

 Address for correspondence: Rubaiyat Jahan, c/o Peter Roger, Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University, Sydney, New South Wales, 2109, Australia; Email: peter.roger@ling.mq.edu.au.

purposes. The well-documented Global English phenomenon poses important challenges to established practices and principles of English language pedagogy. In particular, the issue of the cultural manifestations associated with the English language and the way in which these are approached pedagogically in non-English speaking contexts gives rise to a number of important questions for both language teachers and learners.

In seeking to learn a foreign language, learners generally expect that they will need to become familiar with the culture of those who speak this language as a mother tongue. In the case of languages that are associated with a single nation-state, the target culture associated with the language in question tends also to be defined along national lines. In the case of English, learners of the language living in countries where English is spoken as the dominant language will naturally link the notion of the 'target culture' with visible aspects of the culture of the English language speakers that surround them. In non-English speaking contexts, however, the concept of a 'target culture' associated with the English language, from the perspective of foreign language learners of the language, is potentially ambiguous.

To demonstrate the current sociolinguistic profile of English language on a world scale, Kachru (1985, 1992) provides a concentric model of English users. Based on the types and nature of spread, patterns of acquisition, and the functional roles of English in various cultural contexts, this model takes the form of three concentric circles – the Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle refers to countries such as the UK, USA, Canada and Australia, which have the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English. The Outer Circle (taking in Bangladesh, India, Kenya and Hong Kong, for instance) represents the regions which have passed through extended periods of British colonisation and have subsequently institutionalised varieties of English into governmental, legal, education and literary domains. The Expanding Circle includes countries where English has various roles and is widely studied but for more specific purposes (e.g. to conduct business, to access technology, or to access printed information in a range of academic disciplines) than in the Outer Circle. The 'performance' varieties of English used in the Expanding Circle often lack an official status and are typically restricted in their use (Kachru, 1985).

Due to the multi-faceted role of English on the international stage, some traditional views regarding the English language now face questions of relevance (Kachru, 1992; Kachru & Nelson, 2001). For instance, the view that English is learned only as a tool to understand American or British cultural values in order to function within these societies is clearly obsolete. This may seem an obvious point to make, but a perusal of some current series of English language textbooks might lead one to conclude that the spread of such cultural knowledge is in fact still central to the learning of English. In the pluralistic regions of the Outer Circle countries (where a number of language groups

often co-exist) English is also an important tool to transmit local traditions and cultural values, as it can sometimes be seen as comparatively 'neutral' in relation to competing local and national languages. This notion of 'neutrality' has, however, been disputed by a number of authors, including Canagarajah (1999) and Pennycook (2003), who argue that English cannot be separated from its political and ideological associations.

Pennycook (2003) also expresses a number of other concerns with the world Englishes paradigm as set out by Kachru in his concentric circular model. In particular, he questions "...the descriptive adequacy of the three circles; the focus on varieties of English along national lines; and the exclusionary divisions that discount 'other Englishes'" (p. 518). In response to such criticisms, Bolton (2005: 78) expresses the view that "the Kachruvian model of the three circles was never intended to be monolithic and unchanging" but that the world Englishes paradigm (with which the work of Kachru is so closely associated) has been consistent in its inclusivity and pluralism. He cites a range of works by Kachru and others over the past two decades in support of this position. Bolton (2005: 70-71) also provides a concise summary (in table form) of various approaches to the study of the global spread of English, including the well-known work of Phillipson on linguistic imperialism and cultural hegemony associated with the language.

AN INTEGRATIVE DILEMMA

The emergence of English as a global language also necessitates a re-thinking of some of the established components of the construct of *motivation* in second/foreign language learning. Gardner and Lambert (1959) first used the terms "integrative" and "instrumental" to describe learners' orientations in pursuing their L2 learning goals. Integrative motivation describes a situation in which an individual's interest in and positive attitudes towards the target language group provide the impetus for language learning, while instrumental motivation refers to language learning efforts that are directed towards more function, utilitarian goals (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). Gardner later developed the Socio-Educational Model of Second Language Acquisition, the latest incarnation of which can be found in Gardner (2001). As Dörnyei (2005) points out, views of motivation that reduce the construct to a simple integrative/instrumental dichotomy are commonly encountered in both the literature and in popular discussion of the topic, but represent a oversimplification of the Gardnerian view. An examination of the many models and frameworks that have been proposed to conceptualise second and foreign language learning motivation (such as can be found in Dörnyei, 2001, for instance) reveals that issues of integrativeness and instrumentality are only part of the overall picture.

The concept of 'integrativeness' describes a relationship at the interpersonal level with members of the target language community. In Dörnyei's (2005: 97) words,

In broad terms, an integrative motivational orientation concerns a positive interpersonal/affective disposition toward the L2 [second language] community and the desire for affiliation with its members.

In English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, however, there may be little or no contact with an identifiable L2 community. In Japan, for instance, Yashima (2002) maintains that some learners consider English to be a language that connects them to "foreigners" around the world, with whom they can communicate in English. Yashima thus reconceptualises integrativeness in terms of what she refers to as "international posture", a concept which includes

...interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to stay or work, readiness to interact with international partners and, one hopes, openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures, among others (p. 57).

Dörnyei (2005) also calls for a re-interpretation of the notion of integrativeness, echoing the views of other researchers who point out that the concept as it applied to French and English Canada (where the original research of Gardner and colleagues was done) does not always transfer readily to other language learning contexts, in particular those which concern the teaching and learning of English as a global language.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

The contemporary reality of English as a global language raises a number of issues that relate to 'target culture' as it applies to the learning of English as a foreign language. While some of these issues could be seen as primarily political questions, there are also clear pedagogical implications that flow from them. To the extent that there is an 'integrative' component in learners' motivation, it follows that it will be difficult to nurture and encourage a sense of integrativeness if the learners (or their teachers) have a skewed or unrealistically narrow view of the target culture associated with the language that they are learning.

This study targeted a group of English language teachers from a range of countries. These individuals had themselves learned English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL), and were thus selected for their ability to provide both a teacher's and a learner's perspective. The broad aim of the study was to explore in depth the meaning of the term 'target culture' from the perspectives of ESL/EFL teachers and learners in

various global contexts. The topics for discussion by the participants were selected to elicit details of the factors that influence their conceptualisation of this target culture, and the attitudes that they hold towards it. As is discussed below, a focus group discussion was the method of data collection used in this research, which was exploratory in nature and designed to make a contribution to theory-building in the field.

METHODS

To generate data for this project, a focus group discussion (FGD) method was employed, as the prime goal of this qualitative study was to elicit and record in-depth information regarding the views held by a small group of English language teachers (and thus also English users) from a range of non-English speaking contexts on the English language and the cultural components associated with it.

In comparison to other qualitative research methods (such as individual interviews) for gathering primary information, an FGD appeared to be best suited to this kind of research project as this approach is designed to generate a comprehensive set of data on a particular issue based on the individual as well as collective views of a moderate number of participants. In addition to this, as Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) point out, from focus group data the researcher can access deeper level meanings of the participants' views and link them with related issues.

According to Bloor *et al*. (2001), apart from the fact that information generated is based on individual as well as collective views, focus group data can also shed light on the uncertain and ambiguous issues as (unlike individual interviews) the participants can share and exchange their views during the course of the discussion. Therefore, a complete set of data from an FGD may portray individuals' changing perceptions as they debate, agree and disagree with each other while participating in the discussion. The discussion thus provides an opportunity for ambiguities to be resolved. The views of Bloor *et al*. (2001) also lent support to the choice of this methodology for this specific research project, as it appeared that some of the primary issues that would be likely to arise in this research project might involve a series of 'dilemmas' pertaining to English and the way it is taught. These could include, for instance, whether to adopt a standard variety or local variety of English, whether to follow "native" or "non-native" models of English, and whether or not the language is inherently culturally biased. In addition to this, it was felt that tapping into the individual as well as collective views held by the participants would ultimately enrich the research outcomes.

Participants

The focus group participants for this research were five postgraduate students of Applied Linguistics/TESOL (aged between 25 and 35), all of whom had had English language teaching experience in non-English speaking contexts for a minimum period of two years. All had come to Australia as international students less than two years before the time of the study. The primary reason for selecting the participants with the combination of (1) an English teaching background in non-English speaking countries and (2) current candidature in an applied linguistics programme was that in addition to drawing upon their own experiences in teaching/learning English, it was hoped that they would also draw upon their critical and analytical theoretical knowledge of applied linguistics and English language pedagogy.

Two male participants ("Dae-Young" from South Korea and "Fardi" from Indonesia) and three female participants ("Mayumi" from Japan, "Emily" from Kenya and "Shreya" from Mauritius) from five different countries of Asia and Africa expressed an interest in participating in the study, and were recruited for the focus group as an opportunity sample. In terms of Kachru's (1992) concentric circles, two of the participants of the focus group session come from Outer Circle countries (Kenya and Mauritius) while the other three come from Expanding Circle countries (Japan, Korea, and Indonesia). The participants' countries of origin thus fell into two groups: those in which English has primarily instrumental/functional applications, and those which have a long history of institutionalised English, and where established roles for the English language exist in the domains of government, education and literature.

Data Collection Procedure

A focus group discussion involving all five participants was arranged, and took place in a recording studio on the university campus where the participants were studying. It was moderated by one of the researchers, and lasted for fifty-three minutes. The entire session was audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. To elicit the views of the participants, the focus group discussion followed a semi-structured format. The moderator presented all the five participants with open-ended questions to stimulate an open debate where the participants had the opportunity to agree or disagree with each other. The moderator did not express views during the course of the debate, but did attempt to sequence the discussion and keep it 'on track' so that the research questions were addressed.

The focus group session began with a general discussion on what the participants considered to be the key essence and components of the construct commonly referred to as 'culture'. This general discussion on the nature of 'culture' was followed by a more focused discussion on the issues of cultural connotations associated with the English

language teaching/learning in the non-English speaking contexts. The session ended with a discussion of the issues relating to some practical aspects of teaching/learning this particular 'target culture' (however the participants perceived it) in their own English language teaching contexts. All five individuals participated in the discussion; the participants from Mauritius and Kenya, however, tended to offer information more frequently and speak in longer 'turns' throughout the session, when compared with the other participants.

The full list of focus group questions is reproduced in the appendix.

Data Analysis

Given the number of participants and the fact that this research aimed to elicit views and attitudes of the participants in relation to the English language linked with various cultural manifestations, the data lent itself to a qualitative thematic analysis. To enable this analysis, a thorough transcription of the group discussion with *all* recorded spoken features (including back channeling, incomplete utterances and interruptions) was undertaken. Pseudonyms were used for all participants to maintain anonymity. The second step was to highlight and gather all of the extracts from the data pertaining to a particular theme. The participants' views on each of these themes were then compared with theoretical perspectives from the relevant research literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The outcomes of this focus group study highlight some attitudes and perceptions relating to English and its role in the countries concerned. Broadly speaking, the themes that emerged concerned issues of (a) 'ownership' of English, (b) acceptance of cultural elements that are seen to be 'foreign', and (c) native and non-native models of English. These themes are discussed, and the potential implications for pedagogy are explored with reference to calls in the literature (covered earlier) for a reconceptualisation of integrative motivational orientation.

Ownership of the English Language

Along with institutionalization of English in the classroom, administration and legal systems, Outer Circle countries tend to use the English language as a tool to transmit local traditions and cultural values (Kachru, 1992). This phenomenon is clearly evident from the accounts of the Kenyan and Mauritian participants of the focus group session.

In both Kenya and Mauritius, respondents reported that they used English textbooks that were produced locally. Those countries do have English textbooks from other countries, though interestingly not only from native English speaking countries. According to Emily (the Kenyan participant), "we have Kenyan poems and if we have to expand we have…the literature from Africa before we expand the literature from the rest of the world…we concentrate more what is local" (Turns 221-225). This account reveals a sense of ownership of English on the part of the Kenyan participant along with an illustration of the phenomenon described above, where English textbooks and literature convey 'local' values and traditions. The Mauritian participant, Shreya, also addressed these issues explicitly in her statement on the representation of culture(s) through the English language and (specifically) through English textbooks in the Mauritian context. Like Kenya, English textbooks are produced by the Mauritius Ministry of Education. Shreya's comments also suggest a familiarity with material that reflects a more 'local' contextualization of the language (Turns 26-28):

> *…if you read an African text or even an Indian text…they have their own variety and they have coined words which might not exist in what we call Standard English…so in that sense it is not necessarily the vehicle for a culture of British, American, Australian sorts of language.*

This statement echoes Emily's example of English teaching in a non-native context: "if you learn English from an Indian teacher…then you will be learning the Indian culture more than the English culture" (Turns 346-348). The focus group data therefore not only highlights the acceptance and integration of English into the Kenyan and Mauritian societies, but at the same time reflects a recognition of local varieties of English as well as "World English" perspectives. As will become evident later, this is a picture that contrasts sharply with the accounts provided by the Korean and Indonesian participants in describing their own contexts.

Although the examples of English use discussed here by the participants from Kenya and Mauritius are limited to teaching materials and works of literature, throughout the focus group discussion one can see consistent indications of a recognition of the realities of World English on the part of these participants, as they discuss their own national contexts. On a number of occasions, both the Kenyan and Mauritian participants referred to concepts such as 'Indian and Caribbean literature', 'Indian teacher', and 'Indian and African coinage of words' which exemplify this awareness.

In contrast to the Outer Circle representatives, the focus group data from the Expanding Circle (Japan, Korea, and Indonesia, in this case) participants suggests that World English perspectives are only just beginning to enter the popular discourse in these societies. According to the Indonesian participant, Fardi (Turn 197), some English

teachers in the Indonesian context feel that it is no longer necessary to follow the 'native' norms of English as "the English is changing". He points out, however, that from the students' point of view, the definition of proficiency remains limited to notions of native norms. Despite a dominant focus on American English in the Japanese school system, it is interesting to note that the Japanese participant, Mayumi, had had occasion (as a teacher) to make reference to local varieties of English such as Indian English and Singaporean English (Turn 291).

Degree of Cultural Acceptance

On the basis of the focus group data, one gains the impression that in countries such as Korea, Indonesia, and Japan there is a degree of ambivalence with respect to the acceptance of cultural connotations that are seen by many as inevitable accompaniments to the English language. In Korea and Japan in particular, students tend to learn English from materials that present American norms, and apart from classroom instruction they primarily receive exposure to English through television or videos. However, from the data one can gain the impression that the Koreans and the Indonesians to a certain extent are struggling to incorporate what they see as the cultural phenomena associated with the English language into their own contexts.

In describing the status of English in Korean contexts, the Korean participant Dae-Young reported that although the society is (to some extent) taking up the English language, there is some resistance to accepting "English culture." From Dae-Young's responses, one gains the sense that "English culture" means primarily "American culture", as he tended to use the two terms interchangeably. Dae-Young commented that despite considerable efforts to speak in English on the part of "older Koreans", they often fail to master the language which (according to certain "Korean English specialists" to whom he referred) is because they are reluctant to accept English culture (Turn 30).

An interesting example from Dae-Young's contribution to the focus group discussion may shed some light on the reasons behind this resistance in the Korean context. On his initial encounter with an American television drama, Dae-Young reported that he found it 'shocking' to see the openness with which emotions were displayed in the American drama, which he claimed were out of keeping with Korean values. In Dae-Young's words, "most of Korean people… they think it is not good to show our emotion directly" (Turn 109).

According to the Indonesian participant, Fardi, it is in order to use and handle modern technology that Indonesians should learn English. However, English seems to have contributed to the notion of a 'generation gap' in the Indonesian context. To illustrate this point, Fardi spoke of the politeness "levels" that characterise Javanese (his

native language) and are selected according to the relative age, rank, status, and levels of intimacy between speakers: "we have our own language [Javanese]…divided into three levels – low level, medium level and high level...high level to speak with older people, we use medium level to speak with colleagues, we use low level for close friends" (Turns 44-46). Hence by learning to speak in English, the young generation of Indonesia, according to Fardi, tends to adopt into Javanese certain "English" practices in addressing others. This is evident in the use of the equivalent of 'you' as a universal second person reference, a practice to which the older Indonesian generation is not accustomed and one which leads to comments that the younger generation is becoming less polite (Turn 48).

The Korean language is similarly rich in honorific devices. Therefore, to Dae-Young, it appeared surprising when he saw in an American drama that characters used the pronoun "you" regardless of the age and status of the person being addressed (Turns 101 & 103). While Fardi referred to the 'transfer' of this practice to Javanese, Dae-Young described it as a characteristic of English, rather than as a cultural practice that had affected the Korean spoken by young people in his country.

Although the Kenyan participant, Emily, did not share the same view of the English language as the Korean and Indonesian participants, she also regarded the cultural values of the so-called "western countries" as "egalitarian". In discussing the native models of English teaching and the western teaching perspective (Turn 181-185), Shreya compared commonly-held views of approaches to teaching and learning in western countries with her Mauritian context and concluded by saying that "the [western] view is more liberal…it's more egalitarian".

The participants' responses suggest a degree of resistance to the uptake of various cultural elements associated with the spread of English in countries such as Indonesia and Korea. The degree to which this sort of phenomenon is *genuinely* attributable to the influence of English is arguably unimportant, if many in the society believe it to be the case. An important issue that emerges from the focus group data is the view of the English language itself. According to the focus group data, it appears that the participants from Korea and Indonesia tend to view the English language as a culturally biased language. By contrast, the participants from Kenya and Mauritius appear to see English as a culturally neutral language. Whatever the colour of the lens that the participants use to view the English language, it is apparent from the data that they all regard both the cultural manifestations conventionally associated with English-speaking societies as generally 'egalitarian'.

In summary, the focus group data points to ways in which countries such as Kenya and Mauritius (both former British colonies) have appropriated English for their own purposes and created their own discourses in English. The responses of the Kenyan and

Mauritian participants suggest that a sense of ownership of English is realised in their approaches and attitudes towards the English language. This is in stark contrast to the characterisations offered by the participants from Korea and Indonesia, which were dominated by notions of English as a language associated with foreign norms of behaviour.

"Native" and "Non-native" Models of English

The focus group session canvassed the participants' view on native and non-native models of English, particularly on the extent to which these issues have an impact on English language pedagogy in different parts of the world. When the participants were asked to comment on whether it is relevant nowadays to adopt "native" models of English in teaching English in the non-English context, their responses tended to focus on teaching methods, conceptualisations of native and non-native models of English in terms of accent and pronunciation, and issues relating to standards, norms and attitudes.

The Mauritian participant Shreya's view on the issue of native/non-native models was, as indicated above, cast in terms of teaching methods. She claimed that teaching approaches and practices emerge "automatically" in a given context as teachers often reproduce what they have learned from their own teachers. In the Kenyan context, according to Emily, people have not been exposed to native English speaking teachers of English (meaning teachers from countries such as England, the United States, Canada and Australia) for several generations and the Kenyan teachers use their "native model" of English, which remains unquestioningly accepted: "my students accept what I teach them" (Turn 213).

Emily's account, however, contrasts with the Indonesian perspective. In Indonesia, Fardi reports that teachers' and students' perspectives on the issue of English norms are often rather different. Even though they know that learning to speak so-called native-like English in a non-native context is almost impossible and that many countries have already developed their own models of English, English language teachers in Indonesia (according to Fardi) do not have the opportunity to express the view that "English is changing and we don't have to follow the native". The students, on the other hand, tend to crave native-like English and want to sound like native speakers of English. Fardi points out that Indonesians hardly ever speak in English among themselves and their exposure to spoken English comes mainly through American television programmes or English language movies. Hence, the only variety of English that the Indonesians can imagine acquiring is a 'standard' variety of English.

The Korean participant Dae-Young, on the other hand, emphasized the inclusion of both native and non-native teachers in the English teaching profession. According to

Dae-Young, native speakers of English are appropriate for teaching oral English while local or non-native teachers are good for explaining the grammar. Though Dae-Young did not address the issue of native/non-native models of English directly, his statements raise the issue of the need for negotiation or consensus between native and non-native teachers of English and (by implication) the degree to which certain models of English and approaches to teaching it would be privileged (or sidelined) in the process. Shreya, on the other hand, dismissed the idea of negotiation or compromise by saying that the learning of English differs from country to country, as does the role of English, so that "you cannot teach students who come from a certain background with methods which come from elsewhere" (Turn 179).

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study have pedagogical implications related to the issue of 'integrativeness' in learning English in the non-English speaking context. The way in which integrativeness is defined is, in turn, closely linked to notions of target culture, the central focus of this research. The limitations of the current study, some preliminary pedagogical implications and scope for further research in this area are discussed below.

Limitations of the Study

The small number of participants is the primary limitation of this research, as far as the generalisation of the outcomes of the research is concerned. As mentioned earlier, the five participants "represented" the Asian (Japan, Korea, and Indonesia) and African (Kenya and Mauritius) regions, as well as the Expanding (Japan, Korea, and Indonesia) and the Outer Circle (Kenya and Mauritius) countries based on Kachru's (1985, 1992) concentric models of English users. Although the individual participants were able to contribute "data" from their direct experience in these countries, individuals cannot of course be said to "represent" the range of views that one would necessarily expect to find among language teaching professionals in any given country. However, the findings do raise a number of issues that could be incorporated into larger scale qualitative or quantitative studies in the future in order to test the wider validity of the results of this initial focus group study.

As is common in focus group research, levels of participation across the group were not equal, and the discussion was, at times, dominated by one or two of the participants. Providing the focus group questions to participants in advance may have allowed them to collect their thoughts prior to the session so that they were then able to express ideas more readily when they came together.

Integrativeness in the Teaching and Learning of English

It is interesting to consider the responses of the focus group participants in light of the calls of Dörnyei (2005) and others for a reinterpretation of the notion of integrativeness where English is being learned in traditionally non-English speaking contexts. From the responses of the Indonesian and Korean participants, it appears that what may ultimately drive this re-thinking of integrativeness is in fact the level of disquiet in some societies about a perceived invasion of what might be called "English culture", elements of which in turn are seen as coming from "the west" (most notably from the United States). Dörnyei (2005: 97) suggests that

> *...one way of extending the concept of integrativeness is to talk about some sort of a virtual or metaphorical identification with the sociocultural loading of a language, and in the case of the undisputed world language, English, this identification would be associated with a non-parochial, cosmopolitan, globalised world citizen identity.*

The present study suggests that even where a specific culture (such as American culture) *is* seen (rightly or wrongly) as the "target culture" associated with English, perceived cultural conflicts with this target community and culture may mean that learners of English feel less inclined to engage with it. A re-definition of the "group" with which learners can choose to affiliate as part of their English language learning journey (along the lines suggested by writers such as Yashima, 2002 in her discussion of "international posture"), may go some way to addressing the ambivalent attitudes of learners. The challenge for language teachers is to make concrete and thus bring alive for learners what Dörnyei (above) refers to as "a virtual or metaphorical identification" with a world citizen identity. Although the focus of this study was the notion of "target culture", it must be acknowledged that in many parts of the world English is learned for purely "instrumental" purposes, and there may be little (if any) engagement with the cultures of those who speak the language.

Modiano (2001) suggests that language teachers and those involved in language planning in various parts of the world would do well to implement teaching practices which preserve the linguistic and cultural integrity of non-native speakers of the language. The present study suggests that this is certainly an issue of concern for learners in Expanding Circle countries, but that Outer Circle countries such as Kenya and Mauritius have been more successful at achieving this balance. It would be interesting to determine whether or not these very preliminary findings could be confirmed by larger scale studies.

A distinctive definition of "target culture" is indeed needed to develop relevant teaching materials and approaches for teaching/learning English in the non-English

speaking context. This research has discussed various issues relating to cultural manifestations associated with English which in a sense divide English users around the world in their perceptions of English, although in broad terms their purpose seems to be the same, that is, to use the English language as a useful communication tool. Therefore, a precise definition of "target culture" (and one which takes into account the diverse range of English language users in the Outer and Expanding Circles) might help English language learners to see new opportunities to engage to a greater extent with the cultural elements associated with English in traditionally non-English speaking contexts.

Future Research Directions

The results of the present study suggest that additional research of a qualitative nature will be able to provide rich, "thick" descriptions of the way in which people from various walks of life in vastly different parts of the world view English and its cultural associations. This study explored the views language teachers; it would be instructive to conduct a larger scale study of English language teachers in countries such as those represented here, and to compare the perspectives of those involved in teaching the language with the views and attitudes held by learners who do not have training or experience in language education. As the role that English plays in a global and local sense will no doubt continue to evolve, there is certainly also scope for longitudinal research that attempts to document such changes over time.

THE AUTHORS

Rubaiyat Jahan recently completed a Master of Applied Linguistics degree at Macquarie University. He is currently lecturing in the area of English language and literature at the Institute of Education and Research, Rajshahi University in Bangladesh. The empirical data in this paper is based on a dissertation that he completed as part of his Master's degree at Macquarie.

Peter Roger is Lecturer in applied linguistics in the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University, Sydney. His research interests include interpreter-mediated interactions in healthcare settings, bilingual aphasia and individual differences in second language acquisition. He teaches on postgraduate programs in the fields of applied linguistics and speech pathology.

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Appendix:: Questions for the Focus Group Discussion

Concept of "Target culture"

- What is "culture"?
- Does English language teaching/ learning need to involve some learning/teaching of "culture"? To what extent (if at all) does this vary from one context to another?
- Is the English language primarily learned (in your experience) as a tool to teach and promote understanding of American, British or any other specific set of cultural values?
- How do people learn about the target culture (in the non-native teaching/learning context)?
    - If cultural knowledge is gained primarily from textbooks, then to what extent is it conveyed explicitly / implicitly?
    - Or, can people only really learn about a target culture through interaction with the "members" of this culture?

Whose/ Which culture?

- If English language teaching/ learning needs to involve some learning/teaching of "culture", then whose/which culture is this? *(Prompt with examples if necessary)*
- What factors will determine this?

Attitudes towards "Target culture"

- Is the concept of "target culture" associated with English analogous to the "target culture" associated with other languages?
- To what extent is it relevant nowadays to adopt the "native" models of English in the teaching and learning of English in non-native contexts?
- Should we reject the "native models" or should we try to reach a balance between the "native" and "nonnative" models in teaching/learning English?
- Considering the current profile of English users on a global scale (with non-native users outnumbering native users of English) is it desirable to involve more non-native English teachers and researchers in development of materials as well as policy formulation for the global spread of English?
- Some researchers have claimed that the global diffusion of English language is in fact an instrument in the hands of the "western world" that is used for the purposes of linguistic imperialism. Would you agree with this view (completely or partially) or not?

Practical aspects of teaching/ learning target culture in the non-native context

- Who is qualified to teach this "target culture" (whatever it is)?
- Can it in fact be "taught" at all?
- Or, does it need to be experienced?